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2 April 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Photoreconnaissance of Cambodia

1. The principal intelligence problem concerning Cambodia is the flow of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese men and supplies through Cambodia and the use of that territory for sanctuary base areas. Overhead photography of Cambodia territory contiguous to South Vietnam and Laos has been a primary source of intelligence on the extent of the road and trail network and its use. Since the first of the year, however, there has been a lack of coverage, particularly by the U-2, of one of the principal target sectors, namely the northeast corner of Cambodia adjacent to Laos and South Vietnam.
2. Two manned photoreconnaissance programs currently operate over parts of Cambodia. The high-altitude program, GIANT NAIL, is a SAC U-2R and at present is limited to overflights of the hatched area shown on the accompanying graphic. The low-altitude program, FRENCH LEAVE, consists of 7th Air Force tactical aircraft flown from Tan Son Nhut. These aircraft are allowed to penetrate no deeper than 30 km. into Cambodia in the sector between the Gulf of Thailand and the Laotian border. FRENCH LEAVE is limited to a maximum of 30 sorties per month.
3. The restrictions on GIANT NAIL date from 28 December 1965, when the JCS first authorized SAC U-2's to operate over Cambodia within 30 nm. of the Laotian/Cambodian border. This restriction was modified in April 1967 to authorize current areas of coverage as shown on the attached graphic. Missions are scheduled on a near-daily basis but actually fly few of the scheduled missions because of bad weather. The limiting effect of weather on high-altitude photoreconnaissance is demonstrated by the small number of GIANT NAIL missions actually flown -- 8 in January, 7 in February and only 2 in March.
4. FRENCH LEAVE missions, generally flown at altitudes of 1500 to 5000 feet are less hampered by cloud cover which is more prevalent at high altitudes. So far, eighty-five FRENCH LEAVE sorties have been flown during 1970, an effort insufficient to provide the required amount of coverage of the area. These missions are tasked primarily on the basis of the requirements of COMUSMACV. Individual missions or sorties can cover only a limited number of targets or road segments. The value of FRENCH LEAVE photography is also limited because of the lag in getting it back to Headquarters. Such coverage supplements but does not substitute for GIANT NAIL coverage.

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5. The greatest degree of urgency for current photographic coverage centers on the area contiguous to the South Vietnamese/Laotian/Cambodian border junction. Both programs are permitted to overfly this tri-border area but successful coverage is inhibited primarily by bad weather, rather than by flight restriction.

6. In order to ensure continuing priority attention to the tri-border area, the CIA Member of the COMIREX Imagery Collection Requirements Subcommittee has requested that the operators of the two reconnaissance programs continue in their attempts to obtain comprehensive, high resolution photography as soon as possible. The possibility and feasibility of coverage by SAC's SR-71, GIANT SCALE, are also being considered.

Attachment:

GIANT NAIL Graphic (TOP SECRET)

Distribution:

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